



## COMPLETE PROFILE

PAROMITA VOHRA

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Paromita Vohra is an award-winning filmmaker and writer whose work has focused on gender, desire, urban life and popular culture. She is noted for being among the few filmmakers who opened up new languages of documentary, mixing fiction and fiction to create a uniquely personal playful-essay form and for making strong contributions to the feminist discussion in India. In a 25 year career, she has worked as director, writer, actor, installation artist, curator and teacher for various producers as well as her own Mumbai based independent production company Parodevi Pictures.

Paromita has also been a fellow at the prestigious Seachange Residency in Province town and received grants from the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), PSBT and the Jan Vrijman Fund for Documentary. In 2013, Time Out listed her as one of ten people who have changed the way we look at film in India.

### AWARDS

Best Documentary, Ladakh Film Festival, 2012, and Special Jury Mention, SIGNS 2012, for Partners in Crime

Best Short Documentary, IVF, Kerala, 2008 for Morality TV and the Loving Jihad

Best Documentary Award at Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) 2007 and Best Documentary Award at Stuttgart Film Festival, 2007 for Q2P

Women's New Award for Best Film, Women's Film Festival in Seoul, 2006 and Aina News Award 2007, for Unlimited Girls

Award for Best Screenplay, Kara Film Festival, 2004 for Khamosh Pani/Silent Waters (also judged Best Film at Locarno Film Festival, 2003 and Johannesburg Film Festival, 2003)

Award for Best Experimental Documentary at Digital Film Festival, 2004, for Cosmopolis: Two Tales of A City

National Award for Best Documentary and Silver Conch for Documentary at Mumbai International Film Festival, 2002, A Few Things I Know About Her (writer of the film)

## RETROSPECTIVES, MUSEUM AND GALLERY SCREENINGS/WORKS

So Near Yet So Far a sound installation using telephones from the 1930s-1990s exploring a sound-scape of love, migration, technology, cinema, sex and danger.

Partners in Crime and Morality TV and the Loving Jihad: A Thrilling Tale were part of the season of Indian film at the West Heavens Centre, China (2012)

Q2P has shown at the Global Cities Exhibit, Tate Modern, London (2007) and the Dirt Exhibition, Wellcome Art Gallery, London (2011)

Retrospective of documentary works at Lille 3000 Arts Festival, France (2006)

Retrospective of complete documentary works at Persistence/Resistance, New Delhi (2007)

## JURIES AND BOARDS

Board member of the Women in Film and Television, India Chapter and International Association of Women in Radio and Television, India Chapter

Jury Member of the Indian Panorama, IDPA Awards, Toto Funds the Arts Film Awards and the Films Division committees for commissioning films.

## WORK AS DIRECTOR

2013

*Series Director, Connected Hum Tum Season One – Zee TV 10 pm June-August*

A path-breaking, prime time TV series in which six women confronting a personal dilemma were given cameras. In a process based on video therapy they filmed their own lives for a year as they tried to resolve this dilemma, guided by the director. Their narratives were then interwoven through common themes that emerged into a 65-part narrative series which presented a spectrum on what it means to be a woman in contemporary urban India – their relationships, choices, emotional complexities, psychological histories and hurdles, the social contexts, dreams, desires and drama of everyday living which culminated in each woman's resolution born from this unique process of self-shot self-reflection. The series combined high experimentality with a style that was extremely emotional and accessible to a larger audience and is already considered a landmark for Indian television.

2012

*Partners in Crime: Copyright, Creativity, Capitalism*

Who owns a song – the person who made it or the person who paid for it? Is piracy organized crime or class struggle? Are alternative artists who want to hold rights over their art and go it alone in the market, visionaries or nutcases? Is the fine line between plagiarism and inspiration a cop-out or a whole other way of looking at the fluid nature of authorship? When more than three fourths of those with an internet connection download all sorts of material for free, are they living out a brand new cultural freedom – or are they criminals? We meet balladeers and marketeers, metal-heads and theorists, poets and pirates through this rollicking trip through the grey worlds of copyright, art and the market, in a story about love, money and crime.

*Best Documentary, Ladakh Film Festival 2012 and Special Jury Mention SIGNS, 2012*

## WORK AS DIRECTOR (cont'd)

2011

*Bachendri Pal and Dr. Madhusanan:*

Two Documentary style Ads for Tata Steel Brand Campaign for Cinemas and Television

2008

*Morality TV and the Loving Jihad: A Thrilling Tale*

A documentary about the tabloidisation of the news media. The documentary looks at an incident in a small town in Meerut, where police swooped down on couples in a park, assaulting them and inviting the news media to do a “sting” or expose on this crackdown on “moral corruption.” Mimicking the language of news television and the “manohar kahani” or true time pulp fiction, the film examines how the media becomes a moral police via the language of investigation and the expose’. (30 min.)

PRODUCER: PSBT BROADCAST: DOORDARSHAN

Best Short Documentary at International Video Festival of Kerala, 2008

2006

*Q2P*

An essay documentary about toilets, gender and the myth of the global metropolis. The film looks at the silence around toilets and notes how similar it is to the silence around inequality. As you see who has to queue to pee in a city, you learn something about the nature of the city. (54min)

BROADCAST: NDTV

Best Documentary at IFFLA and Stuttgart Film Festival, 2007

2005

*Where's Sandra? Director, Writer*

A short film about the sexual and ethnic stereotyping of Bombay Catholic girls who are often referred to as “Sandra from Bandra”, Bandra being a largely Christian neighbourhood in Mumbai. The film mixes documentary and archival footage with recreated Bollywood and Hollywood style song picturisations. (18 min.)

BROADCAST: NDTV

2004

*Work in Progress: At the World Social Forum, 2004, Director*

Part document, part concert – an impressionistic record of the World Social Forum which took place in Bombay in 2004. The film is made from footage gathered by student reporters during the WSF under supervision of the director. (60 min.)

2004

*Cosmopolis: Two Tales of A City, Director, Writer, Actor*

Two discrete but connected short films which look at the myth of Bombay as a cosmopolitan city. The first *The Forgotten City* traces the changes in central Bombay's identity from a working class neighbourhood to an upscale residential and entertainment centre. The second, *Defeat of A Minor Goddess* interweaves a fictional narrative of a conflict between the Hindu goddesses of food and wealth for control over Bombay with documentary footage about food politics in Bombay and buildings that are for vegetarians only. (14 min.)

BROADCAST: NDTV

Best Experimental Documentary at the Indo-British Digital Film Festival. 2004

## WORK AS DIRECTOR (cont'd)

2002

*Unlimited Girls, Director, Writer*

A personal take on feminism in contemporary urban India. The film mixes various formats – fiction, parody, animation, interview and verite - to see how activists and academics, young people and female cab drivers, bra-buying women and script writing policemen as well as a host of interlocutors in an imaginary chatroom, have made sense of feminism in their lives. The film has had over 200 screenings and is widely used in various countries and is considered to be a paradigm shifting film in terms of documentary form in India.

(95 minutes)

2000

*A Short Film About Time, Director, Writer*

A short fiction film about a young woman with a broken heart, her therapist and his watch.

The film was completely self financed and shot in a day. (11 min.)

1999

*A Woman's Place, Director (India), Show Producer PART 1*

An collaborative film with directors from three countries to examine how women in India, South Africa and the USA use the law to change their lives and communities (for PBS). The film has been broadcast several times. An outreach program which included a 24 page educational guide and language versions in all countries has distributed about 4000 copies.

BROADCAST: PBS

1995

*Annapurna: Goddess of Food, Director, Producer*

A documentary about an organization of women food workers in Bombay's textile mill area. The film has been broadcast in 10 countries and was made as part of a series about women's collectives worldwide for the Beijing Conference.

BROADCAST: NY 1, BITV plus 10 other international partner channels

## ART INSTALLATION

*So Near Yet So Far - Sound Installation*

An installation with three phone stations embodying technology, desire and cinema created for Majlis' Cinema City Project. Like the city and the cinema, the telephone allowed you to be somewhere you were not. Disembodying the voice from the body, and embodying the body in the voice, the telephone allowed a magical crossing past many boundaries: social, gendered, sexual, creating an amorphous, amphibious sensory world of desire, secrecy, role-play and mystique.

The cinema reflected this where the sex, danger and transgression were often expressed around telephone conversations, telephone operators, women, machines and modern girls.

## WRITING FOR FILM AND TELEVISION

### *Khamosh Pani / Silent Waters - Screenplay Writer and Story Development*

A fiction feature about a Pakistani woman and her son, living in the changing Pakistan of Zia-ul-Haq's regime. As they both play out their different narratives in a time of growing fundamentalism, the past returns to change their lives indelibly. Director Sabiha Sumar. (100 minutes).

**Best Film, Locarno Film Festival; Best Screenplay, Kara Film Festival.**

### *Shahon ki Koti - Screenplay and Dialogue Writer*

In a crumbling ancestral home, in Pakistan an old woman clings to the past. Along with herself she makes an emotional prisoner of her son who can neither leave his mother, nor bring back past feudal glory. As these two lost and lonely people drift through time, only a drastic step can liberate them from this dark isolation. (80 min)

Director: Sabiha Sumar; Producer Zee Zindagi).

### *Sunday ke Sunday - Screenplay and Dialogue Writer*

A film about a father and his three daughters searching for new meanings of love and family in the changing city of Delhi - an official adaptation of Ang Lee's Eat, Drink, Man Woman. (IN DEVELOPMENT)

### *Pleased to Meet You - Script Consultant, Dialogue Writer Hindi and English*

An independent fiction film about urban loneliness that follows how the loss of a dog brings together unconnected neighbours in a suburb of Delhi and has a lasting impact on their lives. (IN DEVELOPMENT)

### *Radio Jhumritalaiya- Screenplay and Dialogue Writing*

A young man invents a radio by chance and changes everything in his village with comical, romantic and sometimes illegal consequences (IN DEVELOPMENT)

### *Raat Akeli Hai / No More Lonely Nights Story, Screenplay and Dialogue Writer*

A lonely vampire crosses the city of Bombay by local train in search of blood – but also in search of love. A short gothic tale with a twist. Director: Srinivas Sunderrajan

### *3 Films on Ethnic Conflict, Writer*

Three short fiction films around the theme of ethnic conflict to be used as discussion tools for the People's Decade of Human Rights Education

### *If You Pause: In a Museum of Craft, Writer*

A reflective documentary about the invisible narratives in museums and the hidden histories of rural and tribal peoples. Director – Sameera Jain. (30 min)

### *A Few Things I Know About Her, Writer*

A documentary about the many musical and mythical traditions around the life and work of Mirabai, a 16th century mystical poet-princess whose songs are still sung by bardic tribes and classical musicians alike. Director – Anjali Panjabi. (30 min.)

**Silver Conch, Mumbai International Documentary Film Festival, National Award-Best Film.**

## WRITING FOR FILM AND TELEVISION (cont'd)

*Skin Deep, Writer, Actor*

A faux documentary which explores the narratives of 6 women around body image and self-identity in the context of constantly shifting notions of ideal beauty and womanhood. Director-Reena Mohan.

*Bollywood Inc., Writer*

An 8-part TV series about the corporatisation of Bollywood, India's Hindi film industry produced by UTV for BBC.

*The Stuntmen of Bollywood, Writer*

An hour documentary that looks at the lives of stuntmen in the Indian film industry, focusing on the skewed star system, the absence of safety and insurance and the lure of stardom and daredevilry, for National Geographic. (55 min.)

*Videocon Flashback, Writer*

A TV series about styles and themes in Hindi film music. Producer – Channel V

*The House on Gulmohar Avenue, Script Consultant*

A film about growing up Muslim, but partaking of many identities – religious, gendered, class related - in contemporary India, directed by Samina Mishra.

*Toda Stories, Script Consultant*

A documentary about the myths and anthropologies around the hill tribe of the Todas of southern India, who are the most studied of all tribes in India, directed by Anjali Panjabi.

## WRITING FOR PRINT

### COLUMNS

How to Find Indian Love weekly column on love and contemporary society - Mumbai Mirror, since April 2014.

Paranormal Activity weekly opinion column (Sunday Mid-day, April 2009 to the present)

Ecstasy Aunt fortnightly agony aunty column (Time Out, Mumbai, 2004-2006)

Writer's Bloc fortnightly column on neighbourhoods and urban life (Mumbai Mirror 2005-2007)

An occasional contributor to Yahoo! Originals, Outlook, India Today, Time Out, Tehelka, Gallerie, Wall Street Journal, Asian Age, Man's World, Vogue, Elle on issues of popular culture, urban life, cinema, feminism and food.

## ANTHOLOGIES

### Fiction

Raat Akeli Hai/No More Lonely Nights, short Gothic screenplay in India Quarterly

The Romantic Customer in Mumbai Noir Ed. Altaf Tyrewala

In Exchange short story in Tehelka Original Fictions

## ANTHOLOGIES (cont'd)

Tourists short story in *Electric Feather: The Tranquebar Book of Erotica* Ed. Ruchir Joshi

The First Time, short story in *First Proof: The Penguin Book of New Writing in India*.

### *Non-Fiction*

Essays in Academic Journals

The Politics and Aesthetics of the Indian Documentary (along with Arvind Rajagopal) essay in *Bioscope*

Dotting the I: The Politics of Self-Less-Ness in the Indian Documentary essay in the *South Asian Journal Of Popular Culture*,

Feminism, Advocacy and Art symposium essay in *Signs*

The Schisms and Schemas of Feminist Advocacy, essay in *Dreaming Different: Young Feminist Writings from Around the World*, Eds Shamillah Wilson and Anasuya Sengupta;

### *Narrative non-fiction*

East is East/ Aar ya Paar in *Cinema-City*, Ed. Madhusree Dutta, Kauskik Bhowmik, *Osmosis in Recess: The Penguin Book of Schooldays* Ed. Palash Krishna Mehrotra,

The One Billion Rupee Home in "Bombay Meri Jaan" (Penguin), Eds. Naresh Fernandes and Jerry Pinto.

### *Educational guide*

The use of film as a tool for discussion and with a special focus on Law, Patriarchy and Gender to accompany the film *A Woman's Place* which has been widely used internationally by at least 200 institutions.

## WORKSHOPS

Frequent workshops on writing for film, finding your own creative approach, analyzing popular culture and gender in diverse colleges and organisations including NALSAR University, Hyderabad, Indian School of Business, Chandigarh, Video Volunteers, Open Space, Pune, Majlis, Mumbai, Delhi University, Mumbai University, IIM Bangalore and J. Walter Thompson and Associates, (JWT), Delhi.

### *British Council workshop on Screenwriting in Goa.*

The workshop was held in collaboration with an independent producer and a major film corporate in order to seek unusual scripts and help participants hone their craft. (2008)

### *Girls Media Group -A Woman's Place Project, 2002-2004*

This two-year media education program with young teen girls took place over two years in New York and Mumbai, as part of the work of *A Woman's Place Project*, a collective of women using media for social change. Participants learned how to analyse media with a special focus on using a gender lens but also as a means of having a more empowered relationship with mass media messages. They also learned creative means of expressing opinions and politics. They produced a newspaper, audio diaries, bio-maps and small games and a group video documentary on sexual harassment called "Do You Know How We Feel? Aaaaaaargh! And a group audio documentary

## WORKSHOPS (cont'd)

“On Being Cool” on the pressure to fit in. In the final year they produced individual radio documentaries on diverse aspects of their lives which can be heard on [www.parodevi.com](http://www.parodevi.com)

*Screenplay writing workshop at the Cordoba University in Cordoba, Spain (2010)*

*Workshop on radio documentary narrative at Oberlin College, Ohio.*

Two documentaries on winter and the life of the town were produced and broadcast on community radio out of the workshop. (2008)

*Writing for documentary workshops at the SN School of Fine Arts in Hyderabad Central University.* The workshop lasted 10 days and was held once in each year and helped students convert their research into thoughtful, politically complex and creative documentaries. (2006-2007)

*Challenges to Political Arts Practices*

Co-organised a panel on at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil as part of the collective @Culture, a group of artists working to centralize culture as politics in the space of the World Social Forum. The panelists were Gilberto Gil, John Akomfrah, Jimmie Durham, Koffi Koko and Rula Halawani.

*Changing City, a radio documentary workshop for young people*

Organized by the NGO Open Space in Pune. Two radio documentaries were produced in the workshop.

*Language and the City*

A multi-media workshop for undergraduate students, organized by PUKAR, an urban studies NGO in Bombay. Two radio documentaries and a poster of slang were produced in the workshop and these are distributed to regular users by the NGO.

*World Social Forum, 2004 As a member of @Culture*

A collective of artists working to centralize culture as politics in the space of the World Social Forum co-organised several activities. Primary among them a month long workshop with a focus on both political theory and media practice with media students, which resulted in the production of twice-daily video news bulleting where student reporters worked with media professionals. Also helped create an installation – Bombay/Mumbai/Bambai along with other artists and architects.

*Water and the City*

PUKAR Workshop A multi-disciplinary workshop on the politics of water and urban development. Several audio visuals and films were produced by the participants.



## **TEACHING**

1999-the present

Visiting Faculty at Social Communications Media course at the Sophia Polytechnic, Sri Aurobindo College of Mass Communications, Hyderabad Central University, EAFLU, IIT Mumbai and others.

## **EDUCATION**

1990

Post-graduate diploma in mass communications from the Sophia Polytechnic, Mumbai University

1989

B.A. English Literature (Honours) from Miranda House college, Delhi University